

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

HEADQUARTERS ADDRESS: AVENUE JUSTE-OLIVIER 17

CH 1006 LAUSANNE

SWITZERLAND

TELEPHONE (+41) 21 612 66 66

TELEFAX (+41) 21 612 66 77

E-MAIL: media@isu.ch

Press release

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ISU World Cup Speed Skating Series 2016/17 Preview #WCSpeed

Dutch Kjeld Nuis and American Brittany Bowe will defend the Grand World Cup in the 2016/17 ISU World Cup Speed Skating Series, which will kick-off in Harbin China on Friday November 11. Harbin hosted the World Cup three times before, in 2004, 2006 and 2012. After Harbin, the six leg 2016/17 World Cup series will travel to Nagano (JPN), Astana (KAZ) and Heerenveen (NED) in 2016. In January Berlin (GER) will host the fifth leg and the World Cup final will be in Russian Chelyabinsk in March 2017.

Nuis versus Kulizhnikov

Last year's Men's Grand World Cup was a fierce battle between Nuis and Russia's Pavel Kulizhnikov. The Russian broke the 34 second barrier in the 500m at the Salt Lake City World Cup in November 2015, but Nuis eventually collected more points in his favorite 1000m and 1500m events, during the whole season 2015/16. Last season Kulizhnikov did win the 500m World Cup. Nuis took the 1000m World Cup and Russian Denis Yuskov won the 1500 World Cup. Nuis and the two Russians will be among the main contenders in the short distances again this year.

Canada's sprinting power house

Canada's Alex Boisvert-Lacroix, Gilmore Junio, William Dutton and Laurent Dubreuil will also be in contention in the 500m. The Canadian Sprinters are favorites to win the Team Sprint classification too, after failing to win the inaugural World Cup last season in this event due to disqualification at their home leg in Calgary. The Team Sprint will not be on the program in Harbin, but the event is held in Nagano, Heerenveen and Chelyabinsk.

Dutch Olympic 500m champion Michel Mulder did not manage to qualify for the first four World Cup legs at the Dutch trials in October. His brother Ronald, the Olympic bronze medalist, did qualify. Olympic silver medal winner Jan Smeekens also made the Dutch team.

Swings chasing Dutch

With Kulizhnikov absent at the World Cup final in Heerenveen last season, Bart Swings managed to grab second place in last year's Grand World Cup. The Belgian collected most points in the 5000/10000m and the Mass Start, but he did not win either event World Cup. Swings considers the 2016/17 season a stepping stone towards an Olympic medal in 2018, but he will not turn down a chance to take silverware this year already. He faces Dutch competition with Sven Kramer and Jorrit Bergsma in the 5000/10000m World Cup and in the Mass Start Arjen Stroetinga (NED) will defend his World Cup title.

Asian and Dutch challengers for Bowe and Richardson

America's Brittany Bowe and Heather Richardson dominated last season's Ladies' World Cup series. Bowe won both the 1000m and the 1500m World Cup and Bergsma took the 1500m World Cup. In the 500m the competition is wide open. Korean world record holder Sang-Hwa Lee will be present in Harbin and China's Hong Zhang will eye a medal on home soil too. Zhang won four 500m World Cup races last year.

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In both the 1000m and the 1500m Dutch Marrit Leenstra and Olympic 1500m Champions Jorien ter Mors, who combines Long Track and Short Track Speed Skating, will challenge the American duo.

Sáblíková to face Wüst again

Martina Sáblíková won a record tenth consecutive World Cup in the 3000/5000m last season. The Czech long distance specialist will look forward to a renewed battle with Ireen Wüst in the 2016/17 season. The Dutch four time Olympic champion missed the first World Cup legs last year, because of a concussion she suffered after a bike accident in the run-up to the season. However Wüst is ready again to compete against Sáblíková.

Last season's Mass Start winner Irene Schouten will not travel to Harbin and Nagano. The Dutch decided not to select skaters who did not qualify for individual distances at the Dutch trials and the Mass Start is considered a team event by the Dutch. Schouten did qualify for the 5000m, but that event will not be on the program before the fourth World Cup leg in Heerenveen. This leaves Canada's Ivania Blondin and Japan's Misaki Oshigiri with an excellent opportunity to take and unassailable lead before Schouten has even competed.

New Thialf

After three Asian World Cup legs the skaters will travel to Heerenveen for the fourth event on December 9-11. Heerenveen's legendary Thialf stadium had a complete make-over this summer. The climate system as well as the track itself are new and the skaters look forward to compete on the new track.

For full results of the ISU World Cup Speed Skating Series 2016/17 please refer to <http://www.isuresults.eu/> and <http://www.isu.org/en/speed-skating/series/isu-world-cup-speed-skating>

About ISU World Cup Speed Skating 2016/17 Series

The ISU World Cup Speed Skating circuit consists of six events across Asia and Europe. The series starts in Harbin (CHN) on November 11-13 and moves to Nagano (JPN) on November 18-20. In December the Series goes to Europe stopping in Astana (KAZ) on December 2-4 and to Heerenveen (NED) on December 9-11. On January 27-19 2017 the fifth leg of the event will be in Berlin (GER) and the ISU World Cup Speed Skating Final will take place in Chelyabinsk (RUS) on March 10-12. The full ISU Calendar of Events is available here:

<http://www.isu.org/en/news-and-events/calendar-of-events>

The ISU World Cup Speed Skating Series is available as a live stream on the ISU Skating Channel. Please note that geoblocking may be required in certain territories

<http://livemanager.eurovision.edgesuite.net/isu/index.html>

For further information please contact:

Selina Vanier

ISU Communications Coordinator

E-mail: media@isu.ch

Tel: +41 21 612 66 66

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